

INCHBALD

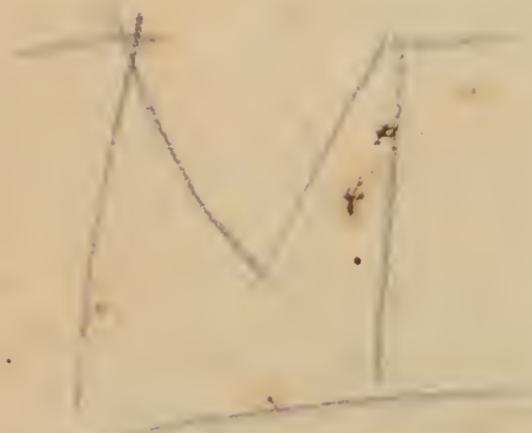
The Midnight Hour

Petite Comedy in 3 acts

By
Mrs Inchbald

17 88

Plane Opt. Glass





R. Cruikshank, Del.

W. Bonner, Sc.

The Midnight Hour.

Flora. Well, you are the prettiest Jack in a box I ever saw.

Act II. Scene I.

Caro H. Hob

THE MIDNIGHT HOUR.

A PETITE COMEDY,

In Three Acts.

BY MRS. INCHBALD.

PRINTED FROM THE ACTING COPY, WITH REMARKS,
BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL.

To which are added,

A DESCRIPTION OF THE COSTUME,—CAST OF THE CHARACTERS,
EXITS AND ENTRANCES,—RELATIVE POSITION OF THE PER-
FORMERS ON THE STAGE,—AND THE WHOLE OF THE STAGE
BUSINESS,

As now Performed at the

THEATRES-ROYAL, LONDON.

EMBELLISHED WITH A FINE WOOD ENGRAVING,

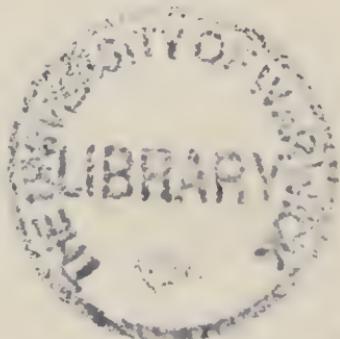
By Mr. BONNER, from a Drawing by Mr. R. CRUIKSHANK.

LONDON :

JOHN CUMBERLAND, 19, LUDGATE HILL.

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
WARWICK
LIBRARY

The Gift of
Mrs G. F. Hall



00243132

REMARKS.

WITH the Drama, thank heaven, the politics of men have nothing to do ! It is subject to neither *custom*, nor *excise*—it may in every respect be said to enjoy a *free trade*. Plots interesting, or otherwise—characters in, or out of nature—puns, good, bad, and indifferent, though liable to *seizure*, come not under the head of *contraband*. The products of literary merit may be imported *duty free*—a lucky circumstance for the intellectual part of mankind ; for, had Shakspeare been subject to an “*ad valorem*” duty, the mines of Potosi would never have been able to meet it !

The “Midnight Hour” is an importation from our lively neighbours, the French ; to whom—whether it be to lead our fashions, season our dishes, give grace to our movements, or farces to our theatres—we must acknowledge ourselves to lie under very considerable obligations. It consists of a variety of tricks and contrivances, verging upon improbability ; and, in this respect, resembles more the Spanish plots. It is so full of action, so entirely made up of bustle and intrigue, that the dialogue becomes a secondary consideration, a circumstance which renders it too pantomimical to rank fairly with the legitimate Drama. But the bringing in of one man in a box, and the carrying out of another, is a sure card with the galleries ; and if conducted with reasonable dexterity, may extend its influence to the polished inhabitants of the lower circles, and even relax the muscles of our graver brethren, the critics in the pit ; for, be it known, that critics, though of solemn aspect and demeanour, are no enemies to rational mirth—at least, we can answer for ourselves—and we quote the opinion of one of the craft, as a faithful transcript of our own—

“ Yet not a Cynic, nor devour’d by spleen,
I needs must smile if Colman grace the scene ;
Let humour broad with polish’d wit combine,
No faculties more risible than mine,—
But must I laugh, because some antie Droll
Squints in my face ?—I cannot for my soul !”*

The *Marquis* is a true Spaniard—a sort of Don Giovanni upon a smaller scale—who, if we may take the word of his valet,

* “The Modern Dunciad.”

Sebastian, can love sixteen ladies, all at the same time, with the most ardent affection. This character is not particularly well drawn ; the only ingenious point in it, is where he perceives the *General* listening, while he is endeavouring to bribe *Cicily* :—the turn *then* given to the dialogue is extremely happy, and the misconception that follows is rendered doubly amusing, from the very natural means by which it is accomplished. The best character in the piece is *Sebastian*. His description of the *General's* household promises more amusement than is realized in the progress of the plot : still, the incidents and hair-breadth escapes are so various and complicated,—and the dialogue, without any great pretensions to wit or humour, so lively and spirited,—that the “*Midnight Hour*” will always be a favourite with the audience.

The talent called forth for the support of this farce on its first appearance, forms a singular contrast to the meagre exhibitions of modern times. The admirable Lewis personated the *Marquis* ; Quick stood forward as the *General* ; and the matchless Edwin did not disdain the very insignificant character of *Nicholas*. Then was the stage in reality the school of excellence ; and an author might rest satisfied, that if combined talent could ensure success—success was certain. An actor, however eminent for ability, was content to fall into the ranks, and contribute his share towards the amusement of the public, without engrossing the whole stage to himself. There existed not that petty pride and jealousy that now-a-days prevent men of talent from playing subordinate characters, however well drawn, from a dread of being outshone ; but if only a dozen lines were to be spoken, or a message delivered, the business of the scene was conducted with spirit and propriety. Had the “*Midnight Hour*” been produced in the *present day*, how would it have been supported ? What actor now on the stage, in his particular line, can boast of *one tythe* of the abilities that distinguished Lewis ? Yet the *Marquis* would, in all probability, have been consigned to some walking gentleman, because the *General* was not absolutely a *nonentity* ; and the *General* himself might have gone a begging, because *Sebastian* and *Nicholas* were to have *some share* in making an audience merry. If we look back, from the days of Garrick, to the final retirement of Kemble, we shall behold, not the *partial*, but the *united* exhibition of talent. No particular actor was *then* shewn up, to the exclusion of another ; every character in the Drama was efficiently supported ; nor was it indispensably necessary that an author should keep one or two favourites *wholly* in view, without presuming to draw other characters that might bring equal talents into the field. Having beheld the stage in its meridian splendour, it is not without feelings of deep regret that we contemplate its decline. Surely, the remaining talent that death and retirement have spared us, might find no unworthy employ, in

the illustration of those immortal Dramas that are still our own. If ever the stage should fall into neglect, its *professors alone* will be to blame. Its credit is not to be upheld by *individual*, but by *concentrated* talent. Where a selfish ambition to be *exclusively* popular prevails, the zeal of both actors and of authors is damped and discouraged ;—of the former, that the stage no longer affords an opportunity for the display of rising merit ; of the latter, that such humiliating terms are imposed, that *genius*, in its greatest necessity, can never be brought to comply with.

The example of Keimble, in playing *Richmond* to Cooke's *Richard*, may well teach a manager prudence, and an actor modesty. As a tragedian, one of the greatest of any age or nation, he did not

“ Bear, like a Turk, no brother near the throne.”

He gloried in the display of rival excellence. It was Shakespeare, not *himself*, that he delighted to exhibit. He was the centre of a circle, that made the stage no less a study than an amusement—the “ *utile*,” as well as the “ *dulci*. ” But our theatrical *economists*, like their brother quacks, the *political*, in the present dearth of talent, are resolved not to bring it forward too prodigally. If *one* character be ably supported—for all the rest, they unload the gibbets, and press the dead men ! Mortal eyes never beheld such scarecrows ! Two Kings of Brentford are not to appear at the same time. There must be a *double* and a *single* pink. If it be *Mr. A.*’s turn to be *great*, the *last letter* in the theatrical alphabet is crucified to shew him up !

“ I'll be your *Foil*, Laertes :—in mine *ignorance*
Your skill shall, like a star i' th' darkest night,
Stick fiery off, indeed !”

It would be injustice not to acknowledge the great merit of Mr. Jones in the *Marquis*. He did *quite as much*, and probably *more* for him than lie deserved. We have before hinted, that the character is not very intellectual ; and an actor of half Mr. Jones's talent and animal spirits would be sure to bustle through it successfully. The *General* is not exactly suited to Mr. Farren. He looks too sharp an old gentleman, to be duped so easily. Gullibility is not Mr. Farren's *forte*. He was, nevertheless, highly entertaining. Mr. Harley, in the vain boaster, *Nicholas*, was just what he ought to be—pert and vivacious. Indeed, had we not good reason to *know* to the contrary, we should pronounce Mr. Harley the most impudent dog alive ! There are two characters peculiarly fitted for him,—*Brass*, in the “ *Confederacy*,” and *Face*, in the “ *Alchymist*. ”

The “ *Midnight Hour* ” was first performed at Covent Garden Theatre, in 1788. It is the production of Mrs. Inchbald, the romantic incidents of whose early life are already before the public. This lady is one of those rare examples of female exceil-

lence, that has preserved an unblemished reputation, amidst dangers and difficulties the most singular and unprecedented. By the force of superior genius and unwearied industry, she maintained a respectable rank in society, and ultimately retired to the enjoyment of an easy competence, the fruits of her various and truly honourable labours. If her talents as an actress were not very distinguished, as a dramatic writer she is entitled to high praise,—ranking superior to Mrs. Cowley; while her Novels, “Nature and Art,” and the “Simple Story,” particularly the latter, are among the best of their class, and interest the feelings, without misleading the judgment, or corrupting the heart. She died at Kensington, on the 1st of August, 1821. Her remains, by her own desire, was deposited, with Roman Catholic ceremonies, in Kensington church-yard.

D—G.

Costume.

MARQUIS.—Black velvet Spanish dress, richly trimmed with black bugles, buttons, and satin, ditto ruffs, black velvet hat and drooping feathers, black shocs, ditto silk stockings, and sword.

GENERAL.—Scarlet dress, trimmed with gold, slashed and lined with purple satin, and large cloak.

SEBASTIAN.—1st dress, grey and scarlet Spanish livery: 2nd dress, ditto, embroidered tunick, large hat and feathers.

NICHOLAS,
MATTHIAS, }
AMBROSE, } Light blue and orange Spanish livery, blue or
SERVANTS, } grey stockings, and russet shoes.

JULIA.—White satin dress, spangled point, and hanging sleeves.

Disguise—Gentleman's black Spanish dress, made like Marquis's first dress.

CECILY.—Brocade petticoat, with blue points, black velvet body, and hanging sleeves, trimmed with blue, and black veil.

FLORA.—Pink petticoat, with black points, black and pink body, hanging sleeves, and black silk apron, trimmed with pink.

*Cast of the Characters as performed at the Theatres Royal,
London.*

	Drury Lane, 1821.	Covent Garden, 1788.	1826.	Haymarket, 1821.
<i>Marquis</i>	Mr. De Camp	Mr. Lewis	Mr. Jones	Mr. De Camp
<i>General</i>	Mr. Gattie	Mr. Quiek	Mr. Farren	Mr. Terry
<i>Sebastian</i>	Mr. Oxberry	Mr. Ryder	Mr. Farley	Mr. Laey
<i>Nicholas</i>	Mr. Harley	Mr. Edwin	Mr. Blanchard	Mr. Tayleure
<i>Matthias</i>	Mr. Hughes	Mr. Fearon	Mr. Barnes	Mr. Williams
<i>Ambrose</i>	Mr. Wewitzer	Mr. Thompson	Mr. Evans	Mr. Coates
<i>Julia</i> ..	Mrs. Orger	Mrs. Wells		Mrs. Young
<i>Cecily</i> ..	Mrs. Harlowe	Mrs. Webb	Mr. Davenport	Mrs. Pearree
<i>Flora</i> ..	Mrs. Edwin	Mrs. Mattoeks	Mrs. Gibbs	Mrs. Tayleure

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

The Conductors of this Work print no Plays but those which they have seen acted. The *Stage Directions* are given from their own personal observations, during the most recent performances.

EXITS and ENTRANCES.

R. means Right; L. Left; R. D. Right Door; L. D. Left Door; S. E. Second Entrance; U. E. Upper Entrance; M. D. Middle Door.

RELATIVE POSITIONS

R. means Right; L. Left; C. Centre; R. C. Right of Centre; L.C. Left of Centre.

* * * The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage facing the Audience.

R.

RC.

C.

LC.

L.

THE MIDNIGHT HOUR.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Street.*

Enter the MARQUIS and SEBASTIAN, R.

Mar. THIS is my native place—the town that gave me birth—and in spite of my attachment to the capital, dear Madrid, I must prefer this to every other spot in the world.

Seb. (R.) Ay, my lord, you come hither to take possession of the estate of a rich uncle just deceased ; and it is that which renders the place so very agreeable—you would, but for that circumstance, forget your gratitude for your birth ; and, while you remained here, lament you were ever born.

Mar. (L.) You are mistaken, Sebastian.

Seb. Why, my lord, although I am nothing more than an humble domestic of your lordship's, if I was not in love, and the object of my passion living in this very identical town, I could not be happy in it, but perpetually pining after the capital.

Mar. Give me your hand, Sebastian—for oncee my equal.

Seb. How so, pray, my lord !

Mar. By being in love—for love is a general leveller—it makes the king a slave, and inspires the slave with every joy a prince can taste.

Seb. Ay, sir, but we are not all equals in love for all that—for instance, you will always be above my match ; for I never did, nor ever could, love more than one—now, your lordship I have known to love sixteen—and all at the same time—and all so well, it was impossible to tell which you loved the best.

Mar. Do not mention any of my past affections—I never loved till now—never till I arrived at this place, and beheld—

Seb. Pray, my lord, how many? and whereabouts do they all live?

Mar. Impertinent!

Seb. Nay, I am sure I don't care how many, provided they are neighbours—but, you know in Madrid, my lord, you fell in love with four, that lived exactly at the different corners of the town ; and I had so far to run every

night and morning with your lordship's "ardent love," and "constant affection," that, if the death of your uncle had not brought you here to inherit his estate, I must certainly have given up my place ; or petitioned your mistresses to have come all into the same neighbourhood.

Mar. O, those passions were different to that which now possesses me—for now I love only one, and she is —

Seb. What ?

Mar. An angel.

Seb. Then she's too good for us,—give her up, sir.

Mar. She is the most charming of her sex, I swear.

Seb. But is she maid, wife, or widow ?

Mar. A maid.

Seb. Hold, hold, don't swear that.

Mar. And that is the place of her abode—[*Pointing to door in flat*] don't repine at her habitation—you see you'll not have far to go, for the house is directly opposite my hotel.

Seb. Repine !—it makes my heart rejoice—why, my lord, in that very house lives my sweetheart—and I make no doubt but she attends upon yours.

Mar. If so, it is the luckiest accident in the world. Fly to the woman you mention instantly, and desire her to inform you of every particular concerning her lady—for, at present, I do not know any thing about her.

Seb. Why, now I begin to think you are really in love—for that is the first and great fundamental cause of a man's real love for a woman.

Mar. What ?

Seb. Because he does not know any thing about her.

Mar. Pshaw !—I *do* know, that her name is Julia—and that she lives in yon house with her uncle, General Don Guzman, who served in the last war. In my youth, while I was on a visit at my uncle's, I have seen the General frequently, for he and my uncle were upon the warmest terms of friendship ; nay, but yesterday he called at my hotel to inquire for me, but I chanced to be from home ; and this morning I mean to return his visit—but then I have no hope of beholding his niece—he is cautious to whom he introduces her ; and to visit him, will but perhaps render my access to her more difficult still.

Seb. I believe you are right, sir ; for I have, now I think of it, a letter in my pocket that will put an end to all your hopes at once.

Mar. From my Julia ?

Seb. No, sir, from my Flora.

Mar. Read it this moment.

Seb. [Reading.] "My dear Sebastian,"—"my dear, dear, Sebastian,"—"my dear life,"—

Mar. Go on, sir—go on—read the whole letter.

Seb. [Reading.] "I no longer live with the old Countess, and the reason is, because she is dead."

Mar. S'death, leave out every thing but Julia.

Seb. Oh yes, very true—where is she? [Looking in the letter.] I believe she is left out, for I can't find her.

Mar. [Snatching the letter.] Give it me.

Seb. I beg as a favour, my lord, you will not read about the tedious minutes, and long nights.

Mar. [Reading.] "I now live in the General's house, and attend upon his niece, the madam Julia, who is going to be married instantly :"—Confusion!—"her intended husband is a rich merchant, who is expected from India every hour—he is the choice of her uncle; for she has never yet seen him." From that circumstance a dawn of hope breaks in upon me. Fly, Sebastian, to your acquaintance immediately—tell her she must aid me to break off this marriage—fly!

Seb. There is more in the letter.

Mar. What, more about Julia? [Looking eagerly.]

Seb. No; but a great deal more about me.

Mar. Pshaw!—be gone: [Seb. going, r.]—which way are you going?—Yonder is the house she lives at.

Seb. Yes, but not the house where she dare admit her lover—we meet at the house of a friend of mine, where we can make free.

Mar. Very well—and be sure to tell this woman, who writes to you with such affection, that if she can procure me the hand of her beloved mistress, I will immediately recompense her with thine—and a fortune into the bargain.

Seb. Dear my lord, a fortune!—How can you mention any other reward, after having mentioned me. [Exit, r.]

Mar. I have but very little hope from this experiment either—'Sdeath, my fortune and my rank are superior to this detested merchant's! The General, her uncle, was ever friendly to our family—What if I avowed my love to him? By heaven, here he is!

Enter GENERAL, from door in flat, L.

Gen. (R.) Who have we here?

Mar. (L.) General Don Guzman—

[Bowing.]

Gen. My dear Marquis, is it you ? Yes, I see it is—and though twelve years since I saw you, yet, if I had not heard of your arrival, I should not have passed you without remembering you perfectly.

Mar. You did me the honour to call on me yesterday—and I beg a thousand pardons that I should so long neglect—

Gen. Oh, no ceremony, Marquis—I called on you when it was convenient—and do you call on me when it suits you. Never stand upon any ceremony ; I hate it. Your uncle and I were friends for thirty years, and never asked one another “ how we did ” in our lives. I hate all ceremony. While you stay in this part of the world, receive the same hearty welcome and friendship from me your uncle ever did—but on the same score—no ceremony.

Mar. [Aside.] By heaven ! this warm reception makes me hope for every thing.

Gen. You seem thoughtful, young gentleman !

Mar. [Aside.] My situation is desperate, and such must be my attempt.

Gen. Quite melancholy, Marquis—your uncle’s death, I suppose ?

Mar. True, General, that does weigh heavy—and yet I have something which weighs upon my heart still more—time presses me to disclose what it is. I am in love—desperately in love—madly in love—and it is with your niece—but I hear you are going to marry her to an Indian merchant—this damps my soul, but, perhaps, inflames my wishes still higher, and impels me to declare, that nothing but an invincible bar shall prevent me casting myself at her feet, and pleading my cause.

Gen. Young gentleman, I desired you would use no ceremony—and I think you have complied with my desire to its full extent.

Mar. Did you not bid me make free ?

Gen. I did—and now I shall take the same liberty myself. You are the most forward, confident, presumptuous man—and if my niece was even disengaged, you should not have her.

Mar. Is this my reward for behaving as you requested I would ?—Why, then, if she was disengaged, I would have her—and so I will now. Don’t be offended—you desired I should make free.

Gen. I’ll suffer death if your assurance does not make me laugh—and if my word was not given to marry my niece to

another, you should have her—just to show people I like they should make free.

Mar. Your word passed, General!—what can that signify when your niece has never seen her intended husband, and, perhaps, when she does see him, may have the utmost aversion to him?

Gen. And pray, my lord, are you sure she likes you?

Mar. No, I am not sure. I know not yet if ever she observed me, although I have followed her incessantly. But, dear General, bring me to her, and let my tongue declare the thousand agitations which my eyes have, I fear, but too faintly explained.

Gen. My lord, my promise is given to Don Carlos—and can I under such an engagement, think of introducing you to her?

Mar. Oh, General! consider the violence of my passion
—consider—
[Kneeling.]

Gen. Consider you are in the streets. [Raising him.] My lord, attend to what I am going to say.—Had you gained my niece's affections before you made this application, I would have listened to it; but now I solemnly forbid you my house.

Mar. Distraction!

Gen. Nay, I only forbid you till the marriage is over—then you are welcome to come as soon as you please. Do not make yourself uneasy—you have no long time to wait. Don Carlos will be here some time to-day, and the marriage ceremony is to be performed at midnight, at the hour of twelve exactly. It is an ancient custom in the family, to marry at that hour.—Farewell!—and as soon as that hour is passed, you shall be welcome to come to my house, and make as free as you please.
[Going.]

Mar. I will make free before that hour, by some stratagem—I will win my Julia's heart, and steal her from you in spite of your security.

Gen. And, by heaven, if you do, you shall have her—and with my consent.

Mar. [Warmly.] I take you at your word.

Gen. Don't kneel down again. My word is given, and I won't recall it. If you can contrive to take my niece from my house, either by yourself, or any one else, any time before twelve o'clock this night, (with her own concurrence, not else,) I will say you deserve her—and with my hearty consent, you shall have both her and her fortune. Nor is my word broken with her intended bride.

groom, for I will take every precaution, during that interim, which bars, bolts, locks, or trusty servants can give.

Mar. But will you only allow me till midnight?—that time is so short.

Gen. Oh, you begin to recant, do you?—*You* take her away?—ha! ha! ha!—and with her own consent too?

Mar. Without it, I would scorn the attempt.

Gen. And, at all events, you had better give it up, for I shall be upon my guard; and invent what stratagem you will, I believe I shall discover it.—*You* take her away!—and within a few hours—it makes me laugh!

Mar. Provoking! [Aside.] Yes, love inspires me—and half my estate to half yours, I do take her away.

Gen. Done—it is a wager—no being off.

Mar. Being off! I insist it is a wager.

Gen. You are so bold, I must go back and see if my niece is safe at home now, or not. [Going.]

Mar. Farewell, my dear uncle.

Gen. Uncle! you impertinent—Stay till you have taken my niece out of my house. Uncle, indeed!

Mar. Remember me to my destined wife.

[Exit General, at door in flat, L.]

Enter SEBASTIAN, R.

Seb. My lord, I have overheard part of your conversation with the General, and surely you have been to blame to let him know your intentions.

Mar. (L.) I was, to give him warning of my designs; but my passion has rendered me unable to project with cunning—but no matter—and what says—

Seb. (L.) My Flora? She has promised you all her assistance; but she is afraid the other servants will not be in your interest; and there are four besides herself.

Mar. No more than four!—and what are they?—describe them.

Seb. One is an old soldier, who has been with the General in all his battles, and has but one promising quality for us; and that is, he is so lame that, although his fidelity is such, we shall not be able to bribe him to let us into the house; yet, if we once get in, we can run out again without his being able to overtake us.

Mar. Good!

Seb. And the porter is a man so deaf, that although he will not be able to listen to any of our offers, we may break open the door, if his back happens to be to it, without his

hearing us. But the man-servant we have most to dread is one Nicholas, the General's valet, a self-sufficient, presuming, insignificant boaster : and for ever officiously concerned for the good of his master.

Mar. Nicholas is his name ? You have named them all now ?

Seb. No, there is one more—the worst of them all—and a female too—old Cecily, the duenna. She (Flora tells me) is even more attached to the General than any servant he has ; and she has ears, eyes, and senses for all the family that wants them.

Mar. She must be the first we win over to our cause.

Seb. Ah ! my lord, I am afraid.—By heaven, here she comes ; just returned from church.

Mar. Do you begone then ; for before a witness it will be impossible to offer her a bribe.

[*Exit Sebastian, L. bowing to Cecily as she passes.*

Enter CECILY, R. and crosses to the General's house.

Mar. What an ungracious countenance !—but no matter ; it is best to begin with our greatest difficulties.

[*She takes out a key, and unlocks the door.*

Mar. [In a soft tone of voice.] Donna Cecily ! Donna Cecily !

Cec. [Turning round disdainfully.] Signor !

Mar. [With much softness.] I think you are one of the domestics belonging to the house.

Cec. (L.) Domestic !—I am the governante general, and the general governante of the whole house.

Mar. (R.) Pardon me.

Cec. I thank you for your compliment, Signor, and am your humble servant. [*Curtseying with a sneer, and going.*

Mar. One word—my dear governante, one word—I have something of the highest importance to communicate to you.

Cec. [Aside.] A lover of my young lady's, I suppose : I am glad of it, that I may have the pleasure of repulsing him. What would you have, Signor ?

[*With a voice the most forbidding.*

Mar. You are severe—that air you put on, agrees but little with those gentle and beguiling looks nature allotted you.

Cec. And do you think to cajole me by your deceitful rhapsody upon my beauty !—[very loud.]—I am old and

ngly—and, what is more, have, thank heaven, as bad a temper as any woman in the world.

Mar. You wrong yourself, I am sure.

Cec. I tell you, I don't—and if you come hither after my young lady, I have the pleasure to inform you, you won't get her—she is disposed of—her uncle has so ordained it, and I would not be the cause of her disobeying her uncle for the world—I am true to him, because he gives me the power to use every body else as ill as I please—and now I wish you a good day: having the satisfaction to leave you in utter despair. [Going.]

Mar. Nay, stay—a hundred pistoles are in this purse—take them, and be my friend. [Holding her hand.]

Cec. No, Signor, my master's interest, and the pleasure of refusing a favour, are both too dear to me to accept your bribe. [The General comes to the threshold of his door.]

Gen. Cecily with the Marquis? astonishing! let me listen. [Aside.]

Mar. Dear, dear Cecily! [Sees the General.] The General listening—I must change the battery. [Aside.]

Cec. Dear Cecily!

Mar. You have your lady's real happiness at heart, I find.

Cec. And who could suppose I had not?

Mar. Pardon me—but I had heard quite a different account of you from what you deserve.

Cec. Is it possible!

Mar. Nay, the General, I am certain, believes quite differently of you, from what you have proved yourself to me.

Cec. If he does—poor deceived man!

Gen. Oh, the hussy! [Aside.]

Mar. Take this purse—nay, it is your due; for I had a capital bet against me, provided you had not acted as you have done. [She takes the purse.] On my knee I thank you; for you have now made me the happiest of men—all my wishes must succeed. Oh, General, where are you now, with your boasted confidence?

Gen. (c.) [Coming between them.] I am here, and you have lost your bet still.

Mar. (R.) Confusion! he has overheard all our discourse. [Affecting confusion.]

Gen. [In extreme anger.] Yes; I have overheard it.

Cec. (L.) So much the better.

Mar. General, forgive us both—we did not suppose you

had been so near—curb your resentment—the goveruante has the highest regard for you and your family—and I protest, her fidelity is a proof against all my persuasion.

Gen. Don't talk to me, sir, I won't believe it—don't attempt to deceive me!

Cec. What do you mean?

[*Surprised.*]

Gen. [To *Cecily*.] Go about your business immediately—you never set your foot into my house again—in pretty hands, truly, I had confided my niece!—a pretty duenna I had chosen!—

Cec. General, what do you mean?

Gen. Never let me see your face again—take care of that—take care I don't even find you lurking about any of my premises with a love-letter under your apron, for, if I do—

Cec. And are you really displeased with me?

Gen. I am indeed—but never you mind—his lordship thinks himself highly obliged to you.

Mar. No, indeed, I don't, General; no, indeed, I don't.

Cec. And do you turn me away?—turn me out of your house?

[*Half crying.*]

Gen. Yes; but never mind—his lordship will take you into his, I dare say.

Mar. No, I won't, General;—no, indeed, I won't.

Cec. Hear me, General.

Gen. Not a word—no reply—begone this instant—and to-morrow I'll send the wages after you, you have so little merited.

Cec. General, General, you use me ill.

Mar. You do, indecd.

Cec. You are in error.

Mar. You are, indeed, General—I protest and swear you are.

Gen. I am glad of it—'tis something new—and I'll keep in it. Why don't you go about your business? [Going to her.] At your age!—an't you ashamed?—you ought to blush; but, for my part, I always thought it of you. I have suspected you these twenty years.

Cec. Have you? then you shall find I will not be suspected in vain—you shall find what I can do—for when I go, your good genius forsakes you.

Gen. Why you are hated and detested by every body—I was the only person on earth that ever could endure you—and now you are found out by me—you have not a friend in the world.

[*Going.*]

Cec. [Following him.] You have lost your senses.

Gen. You have lost your place ! [Exit, at door in flat, L.]

Mar. Rash and unthinking man !

Cec. Young gentleman, he has provoked me so far, I'll serve you against my inclination. I hate you—but I think I hate him something more—therefore, command me, and I will do all I can to obtain you his niece—do you want a disguise under which to enter the house ? I will procure you one ; and instruct you in every turn and winding of the apartments. My dear sir, I will do all the good I can, out of spite.

[Exeunt, R.]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Saloon at the General's.*

Enter GENERAL, L. NICHOLAS, AMBROSE, MATTIAS, and FLORA, following.

Gen. (c.) And I lose both my wager and my niece, if he finds means to take her out of my house before midnight.

[Ambrose gets behind to R.]

Nic. [On the L. of the Gen.] Take her out of this house, while I have the honour of serving you?—the Marquis knows little of the faith and diligence of your servant Nicholas, or he would soon drop the attempt.

Amb. (R.) And knows little of your soldier, Ambrose, who, [Walking up to the General very lame.] on the first alarm, would fly to give him battle.

Mat. (L.) What?—what is all this—[Trying to hear.] It is a sad thing to be deaf.

Flo. [On the R. of the General.] And this said Marquis must know very little of your trusty servant Flora.

Gen. No more professions—I believe you all firmly attached to my interest—and if I should win my wager, I promise each of you a purse of ten pistoles.

Amb. Oh, the wager is already won.

Nic. Yes, sir : and you may as well pay us now.

[Holding out his hand.]

The MARQUIS enters, disguised in a riding cloak and wig.

Mar. They are all assembled, and conspiring against me.—softly, in here, in here. [Goes into a closet-door in flat.

Mat. [After pulling one servant and then another.] Nay, but tell me—what is it?—I am sure there is something going forward.

Gen. Why don't some of you tell that poor fellow, Matthias; he is dying with curiosity to know what we have been saying.

Amb. I'll tell him in the hall, over a bottle.

Gen. But, egad, while we are consulting here, the door is open, and any body may rush into the house.

Nic. How came I not to think of that?—I am not surprised any one else did not think of it—but that I should not!—

Gen. Send Matthias to guard the door immediately.

[Nicholas makes signs to Matthias.

Mat. What?—what do you say?—You need not speak so loud; only tell me what you mean!

[Nicholas makes signs.

Mat. What, the door?—Yes, yes, I will, I will—[Going L.—returns.] What is that, what has all this consultation been about?—Ay, I thought what it was. [Exit slowly, R.

Gen. He's a good servant, notwithstanding he never hears a word that is said to him. Ambrose, both he and you keep guard below—you have quick ears and he hath quick legs—you must hear for him, and he must run for you—keep both of you at the great door, and do not suffer a creature to enter, unless they first give you this sentence,—"Love and honour," which shall be the watch-word for all who have the liberty to enter.

Amb. I obey, sir. [Crosses, and exit lame, R.

Gen. And now, Nicholas, while I step to my niece, to inform her of what has happened, do you run to the port to meet her betrothed husband—for I hear his vessel is just arrived—I durst not leave my house; and as he and I are entirely unacquainted with each other, (except by good report,) he knows nothing of my dislike to ceremony, and may take my neglect to meet him as an affront; therefore, begone immediately with my respects, and I wait impatiently for the pleasure of seeing him; and in your way step to my niece's mantua-maker, and desire her to come and take measure of her for her wedding clothes. A little finery may take up the poor girl's attention, and prevent

her reflecting too much upon the state she is about to enter, with a man she never saw. [Exit, R.]

Nic. (L.) Of all the servants my master has, I am the only one he trusts with the office of receiving his visitors.

Flo. (R.) And of all his servants, you are the only one he trusts with a servile message to a mantua-maker.

Nic. Oh ! great men will sometimes do little offices,—witness my making love to you.

Flo. And great women will not always accept little offices,—witness my refusing your love.

Enter the GENERAL and JULIA, R.

Gen. But, my dear niece.—What, not gone yet, Nicholas ?

Nic. Sir, I fly.

Gen. But remember to give the watch-word to the mantua-maker, or they won't let her in.

Nic. The watch-word !—I will, I will—but what is it—I have forgot it—Flora, what is it ? [Aside to her.]

Flo. I have a great mind not to tell you.

Nic. Yes, pray do.

Flo. 'Tis "Love and honour." [Pushing him off, L.
[The General and Julia come forward.]

Gen. But what do you think of the man who has the assurance to pursue you without first gaining your consent ?

Jul. I think it is one of those injuries a woman does not always resent.

Gen. But when I refused him your hand, he vowed he would take you off by force.

Jul. Do not be alarmed, uncle ; force is seldom used, but to her that is willing.

Gen. But I flatter myself you would not be willing.

Jul. Don't flatter yourself—you know you always cautioned me against yielding to ideas that flattered me.

Gen. And is it possible you would consent to go off with him ?

Jul. I think,—it is possible.

Gen. You are certainly talking thus in jest.

Jul. No, upon my word, I speak seriously—a lover to undertake what the Marquis has done, must love very sincerely indeed—we are always proud of having inspired an ardent passion—too often we cannot but partake of it—and the heart once gone, it is hard to say what will not follow.

Gen. But he is the most presuming young villain.

Jul. Is he young, too ! Oh, dear uncle !

Gen. And you mean to encourage him ?

Jul. You know young people should be encouraged—and Don Carlos can much better bear a rejection ; for he is old, and has been used, I dare say, to the sorrows and disappointments of this wicked world.

Gen. Very well,—go on ; but if the gentleman should dare to come within these walls, I'll do for him.

Jul. No, uncle, let me do for him.

The MARQUIS enters from Door in flat.

Mar. Now, fortune be my friend ! [Aside.]

“ Love and honour.” [Coming as from the outer door.]

Gen. Pray, sir, who are you, that you should know these words ?

Mar. I am journeyman to the mantua-maker for whom you sent, and am come to measure this lady for the wedding suit.

Gen. This strange-looking man gives me some suspicion—no matter. [Aside.] That's right, young man—take the measure instantly—for it will be wanted early in the morning—you must make great haste to have it done.

Jul. No, pray don't, sir.

Mar. Why not, madam ? If your marriage should even be deferred, you may still wear your clothes ; and I am sure I shall think it such extreme pleasure to work for you, I shall esteem it a happiness to pass the whole night in your service.

Jul. You are very good, sir ; but I would not give you so much trouble.

Mar. Dear madam, it would be no trouble at all. [Going to her.] What a shape is here !

Gen. What are you about, sir ?

Mar. In what matter, madam, would you choose your dress to be made ? *a la Turk*, or, in the new style *a l'Anglaise* ? [Looking at her with a sentiment of earnestness which fixes her attention.]

Gen. Come, sir, make haste ! [Impatiently.]

Mar. [Measuring her.] Please, madam, to turn a little more towards me—that's right, very well—now, hold up this hand, now drop this, now take this—

[Offers her a letter.]

Gen. [Interposing.] The Marquis, as I live—hold, hold, my lord.

Jul. The Marquis ? [Aside.] What a delightful man !

Mar. Yes, charming Julia, it is the Marquis,—he who adores you.

Gen. Go out of my house, go out of my house : [*He leads him to the door, the Marquis then breaks from him, runs and kisses Julia's hand violently, and then exit, L. led off by the General, who is calling all the time.*] Let her alone—go about your business—[*After pushing the Marquis off.*] Who's below, there ? who's below ?—What, if I have him secured, and confined here till midnight is over ! A good thought ! Ambrose ! Ambrose ! [*Calling at the door, turns and sees Julia reading a letter.*] Give me that letter—[*Calls again.*] Ambrose, shut the door ; don't let that man go out—Give me that letter.

Enter MATTHIAS, L. slowly.

Mat. Ambrose says you are calling—what would you please to have ?

Gen. Oh, they have let him out ! What did you come for ? I never wanted to give a direction in a hurry, but this fellow was sure to receive it.

Mat. Ambrose said, you were calling.

Gen. Get away, you deaf—get away ; don't you see I am angry ? [*Bawling to him.*]

Mat. Hungry ?—O, very well ; I hear plain enough.

Gen. Get away, you stupid—[*Drives him off, L.*]—it is that scoundrel Nicholas who has sent the Marquis in this disguise ; it was he who gave him the watch-word, I dare say ; but I'll make him remember it.

Enter NICHOLAS, L.

Nic. Don Carlos will be here instantly ; I've run till out of breath.

Gen. Take that, sir.

[*Strikes him.*]

Nic. What ! for my good news ?

Gen. No, sir ; but for giving our watch-word to the Marquis.

Nic. It was he then that passed me as I came in ? I thought it was ; I wish I may die if I did not.

Gen. Oh, you knew it was he, did you ?

Nic. Yes ; I knew it must be a great man, for he gave me such a slap in the face as he came by.—Oh, sir, indeed you must have felt it, to have known how it made me jump : one mauls me in the house, and another mauls me in the streets, and all for nothing !

Gen. How dare you say so ? Can you deny that you sent

the Marquis into my house, under the disguise of one of the mantua-maker's journeymen ?

Nic. Indeed, sir, I did not ; besides, my lady's mantua-maker has only women to work for her ; all her journeymen are gone to England. I dare say, sir, before we were on our guard, the Marquis slipped into the house, and overheard the watch-word.

Gen. Perhaps he did : but no matter—he is turned out of doors. And you,—[To *Julia*]—you good-for-nothing, I have a great mind—

Julia. Aye do, uncle, turn me out of doors too.

Gen. As soon as you are married to Don Carlos, I will—but now, my good Nicholas—never mind that blow I gave you, for I assure you I have certainly forgot it. Let us not be outwitted again—attend no more to watch-words, but deny admittance to every creature except Don Carlos—you say he will be here instantly ?

Nic. Yes, sir, he only waits at the inn till he has taken two large chests from on board his vessel, full of precious things for my young lady, which are so valuable, he will not suffer them to be a moment out of his sight ; I heard him order four porters to be ready to bring them, and his servants hinted to me they were presents for my lady.

Gen. [To her.] Do you hear, you ungrateful ?—[To *Nicholas*.] You have seen Don Carlos : nobody in this house except yourself has ever seen him ; therefore, do you wait at the door till he comes, that no one else may be mistaken for him.

Julia. And must I be the wife of Don Carlos ? Oh, heaven prosper the Marquis's attempts !

Gen. I am afraid your prayers are vain—however, let him try all his arts ; and you may try all yours ; and I will try all mine ; and the first shall be to lock you into your chamber till Don Carlos arrives—Please to walk this way ; no reluctance.

[*Exeunt*, R.

Flo. O, Sebastian ! Sebastian ! I am afraid my mistress is torn from your master for ever—and I deprived of you, for these three years to come at least.

Enter NICHOLAS, L. followed by SEBASTIAN, disguised as Don Carlos.

Nic. Don Carlos.

[*Exit*, L.

Enter GENERAL, R.

Gen. My dear Don Carlos, welcome to Spain.

[*Embracing him*

Enter Four PORTERS, L. with two chests; they place one in the centre, the other on L. side of the stage.

Seb. [Embracing.] General, I am overjoyed to see you.—[To the Porters.] Why did you bring the chests into these apartments?—Pardon me, General; I meant they should have been left in the hall; but, as they are here, permit them to remain—[Exeunt Porters, L.] for they contain a few trifles from India, which I mean to present to my destined bride.

Gen. Don Carlos, why such attention?

Flo. (L.) Shall I call my young lady, pray, sir?—Dear, how I long to have a peep! [Looking at the chests.]

Seb. [Aside to her.] Hush—don't you know me?

Flo. Sebastian, as I live! [Aside.]

Seb. Did you express your curiosity to see these trifles? If you did, here's the key, madam. [Gives the key.]

Gen. She express her curiosity, indeed! I should not have thought of satisfying her curiosity! Don Carlos, walk this way, and satisfy yours, in beholding your future wife.

[Exeunt Gen. and Seb. r.]

Flo. Who would have supposed that 'Don Carlos should be Sebastian, and I not know him till he was obliged to tell me so himself!—But by what means could he contrive to be introduced under that shape. O, he has bribed Nicholas. I dare say.

Mar. [From the chest that is in the middle of the stage.] Flora, Flora!

Flo. Did any body call me?

Mar. I—the Marquis—I am stifled, suffocating!

Flo. In this box, as I live! Oh, excellent!—I shall die with laughing.

Mar. Open the lid.

Flo. I can't for laughing. Hush, hush! don't be in such a hurry—don't be in such a passion—don't speak a word. Let me see if any body is coming—No; all is safe. [Opens the lid.] Come out—no—lie still, and let me look at you a moment. Well, you are the prettiest Jack in a box I ever saw!

Mar. Help me out. [She helps him.] Oh, that's right, —I breathe once more. Hide me somewhere instantly, for I should die if I was kept in that chest another moment.

Flo. Where can I hide you?—We have no place where you will be safe, we are so watched—but Nicholas is in the plot, I suppose?

Mar. No, no, he is not—it is the old duenna whom your

master turned away this morning. She went to Don Carlos, on board his vessel, the moment she heard he was arrived ; and telling him the General was in the country, keeps him with the ship till to-morrow morning ; and, in the mean time, she had my servant disgrised, and imposed him upon Nicholas (who came to the inn to inquire for Don Carlos) for Don Carlos himself. Nicholas in the plot ! no, no.

Flo. I am heartily glad of it ; for, with all his boasting, he is the most unlucky varlet—

Mar. I flatter myself Julia is not averse to my wishes.

Flo. No, that she is not ; but will run away with you the first favourable moment. Hark ! I hear somebody coming in haste up stairs. Get into the chest again.

Mar. Damn me if I do.

Flo. Hide in my closet then.

Mar. What, where I was before ?

Flo. You must, and don't breathe, I charge you.

[*Exit Marquis, at door in flat.*

Enter NICHOLAS, L.

Nic. Flora, Flora—what do you think !—Hush—such a thing !

Flo. What ? What surprising thing now ?

Nic. Speak low. [*He points to the chest from whence the Marquis came, with great significance.*] He is there.

Flo. Who ? What is there ?

Nic. Hush. [*In a half whisper.*] The Marquis. One of the porters has just told me of it. His servant (a Mr. Sebastian) is now playing the part of my master's intended nephew ; and the Marquis himself is shut up in that box. Ha, ha !—[*Laughs.*]—and I am going to have it taken back again to his hotel by Matthias, whom I have ordered to come up and take it away ; and then, as soon as he returns, he and I, and Ambrose, mean altogether to seize this grand impostor, Mr. Sebastian, who is now with my master, and give him a little return for what I received on the Marquis's account this morning.

Flo. A fine story you have been telling, truly ; and I have had patience to hear it all !—Why that chest was full of Indian silks and muslins for my young lady ; I opened it, and took them out before my master ; and have hung them up in my lady's wardrobe.

Nic. Impossible ; it can't be !

Flo. Why, see ; the box is empty.

[*Opening it.*

Nic. Flora, Flora, you are in the plot.

Flo. Simpleton!—How do you suppose any man could lie in this box?

Nic. It would hold two men.

Flo. No, nor half a one.

Nic. How mistaken you are. [Gets into the chest.] There;—pray, an't I in now, and at my ease?

Flo. No,—at your ease? no, nor entirely in. Your head is out.

Nic. There; there, then;—see, there. My head is in now, I hope?

Flo. Yes, now it is in. I find I was mistaken. You are in now, sure enough. [Shuts the lid and locks the chest.] I find I was mistaken.

Nic. But don't shut the lid. Flora, Flora, open the lid.

Enter MATTHIAS, L.

Mat. I am come to take the chest to the Marquis's hotel.

Flo. Here it is; make haste. [Making signs to him.]

Nic. Mathias, Mathias! [Calling from the chest.]

Mat. [Pointing to the chest.] Sad doings here, Mrs. Flora; shameful doings.

Nic. Mathias! [Calling.]

Flo. [Stooping to the chest.] You know you may as well hold your tongue, for he can't hear you.

Nic. General, General! Ambrose! [Calling.]

[She makes signs to Matthias.]

Mat. You need not to tell me. I know who I have got here; Nicholas told me; [Dragging the box.] and I'll give him a hearty tumble or two, as I go along.

Flo. [Very loud.] Pray do.

Mat. Ha?

Nic. Flora! General!

[Calling.]

Flo. I say, pray do.

Mat. And perhaps I may tumble him down stairs.

Flo. Do, you are very welcome. I will help you to the top of the stairs. [She pushes it while he draws it off R.; she then runs to the closet.]

Enter MARQUIS, from Door in flat.

My lord, you find all is discovered; the door is now open, fly away immediately.

Mar. Why go, till I have gained my point?

Flo. You must; I have a project in my head not half

so hazardous as your staying. Fly to your hotel, and keep Nicholas from returning ; that is more essential than any thing at present ; for he pries so into all that is going on, we can do nothing while he is one of our guards. Away, away !

Mar. I obey ; but remember how much I rely upon your zeal.

[*Exit, L.*

Flo. I will be the first to discover to the General, what, in a few minutes, somebody else will tell him, if I don't. By this, I gain his entire confidence, and then—

Enter SEBASTIAN, R.

Seb. Flora, your master has not the smallest suspicion of me. What have you done with my lord ?

Flo. Away, away ! He is gone, and you must follow him. All is discovered.

Seb. How ?

Flo. Ask no questions, but away while you can ; while the door is without a guard ; or you'll be murdered if you are caught.

Seb. But I have left my hat ; let me run for that. [*Going back in great haste, he runs full upon the General, who is entering, R.*] No, I'll run away without it.

[*Exit running, R.*

Gen. What is the matter with Don Carlos ? Where is he going in such a hurry ? [*Turning to Flora, sees her in a fainting fit in an arm chair, L.*] What is the matter with you, Flora ?

Flo. O General, General, General, General !

Gen. One runs away from me ; another can pronounce nothing but my name. What can this mean ?

Flo. The supposed Don Carlos is an impostor !

Gen. An impostor !

Flo. Valet to the Marquis ! and Nicholas has been bribed to introduce him. Nicholas is wholly gone over to them.

Gen. But how did you know all this ?

Flo. The Marquis was hid in one of the chests. I wanted to have a peep at the fine things, and saw him. Oh, [*Trembling.*] I shall never recover my fright !

Gen. One of the chests is gone.

Flo. Yes. As soon as Nicholas found I knew all, he called up Mathias, and made him take away the chest, in spite of my tears and cries ; for poor Mathias, you know,

could not hear me ; and then I fainted, and could not come to you.

Gen. Faithful creature ! Oh that villain, Nicholas ! Why he is worse than old Cecily. Poor Flora ! poor thing ! Take this purse as a reward for thy fidelity.

Flo. Oh, sir, I don't deserve it ; indeed, I don't, sir.

Gen. Take it, take it, I say ; you shall have it. I punished old Cecily, and, by the same rule, I ought to reward you.

Flo. Since you desire it, sir ;—but, indeed, you are too good to me.

Gen. Say no more, but step to my niece, while I run and see that the door is safe ; for, while so many of my house have turned against me ; I have every thing to fear. But you—you are a miracle of faith ; and henceforth all my confidence shall be placed in you alone.

Flo. Why, indeed, sir, I must own, few servants could have done as I have done ; and yet you think too well of me.

[*Exeunt* ; *Flora*, L., *Gen.* R.]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Moonlight.* A Garden ; two Tents, or Pavilions, on each side the stage ; a wall at the bottom of the stage, and a hedge at a little distance from it. Stage dark.

SEBASTIAN discovered, descending from the wall by the arbour-work fastened to it.

Seb. [Jumping down.] Here I am safe. [Calls in a whisper.] Flora, Flora ! This is the very minute she appointed in her note. How can she be so slow, when we have such little time left ! The clocks have now all struck eleven, and, in one hour more, it will be midnight, and our doom fixed. Oh, midnight, midnight ! twelve o'clock, twelve o'clock ! During this season of the year, she and her young lady sleep in this pavilion. [Goes to the Pavilion, R.] and the old General and Ambrose sleep in this. [Goes to the Pavilion, L.] In a country town, such as this,

every body has been in bed an hour ago ; therefore, unless the family sit up to watch. No, here she comes 'Sdeath ! and the old General with her.--What shall I do ? [*Trying to ascend the wall, falls ; then hides behind the hedge.*]—Here, here, here.

Enter the GENERAL, AMBROSE, with Julia's clothes, and FLORA, from the Pavilion, R.

Flo. Dear sir, it is only eleven o'clock ; I beg you will sit up till twelve.

Gen. No, no, I'll sit up no longer ; my fears are as much quieted for this night, as if the clock had already struck twelve.

Flo. Ay, sir, but there is no being sure.

Gen. While there was a cause for apprehension, I was as cautious as any body ; but now my niece is safe in bed, and I have had the precaution to bring away her clothes, even if she had an opportunity of going away, she could not go without them ; besides, her windows are grated, her door locked, and I have the key in my pocket.

Flo. But, sir, she may still —

Gen. Why, yes, she may still go out at the chimney ; for that I have not guarded against :—but if she does, Flora, I'll forgive her. No, no, I'll go to bed ; the Marquis shall not have to boast that he kept me up an hour after my usual time ; to-morrow, it will add to my triumph to tell him I went to bed at my usual hour.

Flo. Well then, sir, if you won't sit up, I will : I will sit till twelve strikes ; and amuse myself by playing on my lady's guitar ; and if you should chance not to sleep, you will find, by my music, I cannot sleep either, while any danger threatens you.

Gen. Good girl, good girl.

Flo. Here, sir, is the key of this Pavilion ; lock me up, I beseech you, too, lest any fatal thing should happen, notwithstanding your precaution, and I be suspected.

Gen. Impossible I should suspect you ; no, no, no, no.

Flo. Pray, sir, take the key : indeed, you had better lock me up ; you had indeed, sir.

[*Forcing the key upon him.*

Amb. Lock her up, lock her up, sir ; I don't think it would be at all amiss.

Gen. Well then, Flora, since you desire it.

[*Takes the key.*

Flo. Thank you, sir, thank you ; good night, sir ; [Curt-saying.] now my conscience is safe.

[Exit into the Pavilion, r. c. the General locks the door.

Gen. [Crosses to r.] Come Ambrose ; I now feel my mind pretty easy : I am only sorry Don Carlos is not yet come, for his ship is certainly arrived ; however, he won't come till the morning now, to be sure.

Amb. [Yawning, as if half asleep.] No, he won't come till the morning now, to be sure.

[Exeunt into the Pavilion, l.]

SEBASTIAN comes forward from behind the hedge.

Seb. Oh, what a rage I'm in : if I was not afraid the General and his crippled attendant would overhear me, I would so abuse—[Goes to Flora's Pavilion, and speaks through the key-hole.]—Flora, Flora ! [Calling softly.] You serpent, you viper, snake, crocodile ! I hate you ; abhor you !—Oh, you good-for-nothing—Oh, that I had you here.

Enter FLORA, from a window in the Pavilion, taking away a large iron bar ; goes up to Sebastian, and strikes him on the shoulder.

Flo. And here I am.

Seb. What do I see ? Why, where, for heaven's sake, did you come from ?

Flo. From the pavilion.

Seb. Not at the door.

Flo. At the door ! do you think I did ? I have a genius above such common methods ; I came by the window, and had the dexterity to move that iron bar, as large—

Seb. But have you had the dexterity to take the bar from your mistress's chamber ?

Flo. No, that is fast yet ; and yet she is out.

Seb. By what means ?

Flo. The General, thinking he had nothing to fear, if he once saw her in bed, as soon as she pulled off her clothes, he seized them and carried them out of the room ; she stept behind one of the curtains ; I drest the bolster in her nightcap ; the old man put his head forward, and wished it a "good night ;" that instant, she stole out of her chamber, and flew to mine ; I lighted him out of her's ; he double-locked the door ; ran to tell Ambrose and Matthias all was safe ; applauded his own sagacity ; and thanked me a thousand times for having devoted myself so entirely to his service.

Seb. But by what means did you contrive to send the note to me of this appointment?

Flo. I sent it by old Cecily. But this is no time for explanation ; my mistress is waiting for me in my chamber, dressing herself in the suit of clothes you sent me of the Marquis's ; which was a lucky thought, as it will certainly much less incommod her flight than a female dress ; and I must go tell her at what signal to steal out of the window to the Marquis, for I forgot it in my hurry.

[*Nicholas appears upon the wall.*

Nic. Who, in the name of wonder, have we here ?—softly, softly !

[*He descends, and conceals himself behind the hedge.*

Flo. Now, Sebastian, while my lady is dressing, away to your master, and tell him we shall expect him here within a quarter of an hour ; and that he must come close by the other side of the garden wall ; and as soon as he is there, he must clap with his hands, so. [Claps with her hands.] I shall be waiting for the signal ; and, the first favourable moment after, I will begin playing on my guitar the favourite air, "*Ma chère Amie,*" and he must take that signal, for the exact time to leap into the garden.

Nic. [*Behind the hedge.*] Good.

Flo. Good, did you say ? I say excellent.

Seb. I did not speak.

Flo. But be sure to caution your master, that he does not come into the garden before he hears that very song I have mentioned, and then to come directly ; but bid him take great care not to mistake one air for another ; for, at that very air, my young lady will steal out of the pavilion to meet him.

Seb. I will remember all with the utmost exactness.

[*He goes, and Nicholas runs on the other side the hedge to avoid him.*]

Flo. [*Calling after Sebastian.*] In a quarter of an hour the Marquis must be here, remember—neither sooner nor later.

Seb. I remember.

Flo. Oh, Sebastian, I forgot—what have you done with Nicholas ?

Seb. O, you make me die with laughing—he is a prisoner, poor devil !

Flo. But did they thrash him well, when they took him out of the box ?

Seb. Oh, yes, they gave him a pretty drubbing, I assure you.

Flo. I am vastly glad to hear it; I thank them a thousand times: I wish I had been there; it was what he richly deserved. But away, Sebastian; mind all I have said, and our fortune is made.

[*Exit into the Pavilion by the window, but so hid by Sebastian's following her close, that Nicholas thinks she goes in by the door.*]

Seb. [Climbing the wall.] I am not very fond of scaling this wall; if I should break my neck, our project is at an end; and that would be shipwreck in sight of port.

[*Exit over the wall.*]

Nic. [Coming forward.] And now, my dear gentleman and lady, you shall pay for all your stratagems: and my poor old master! how glad he will be to see me returned. [Goes to the General's Pavilion.] He is not in bed, I see. General, General!

[*Raps at the door.*]

Enter AMBROSE, in his nightcap, from the Pavilion, L. S. E.

Nic. Ambrose, an't you glad to see me?

[*Putting out his hand.*]

Amb. Get about your business; how dare you show your face here!

Nic. More ill usage still; sure never innocence was so ill treated. Mr. Ambrose, [In the most begging tone.] I pray, I supplicate of you, to inform the General I have a secret of the utmost importance to communicate to him.

Amb. I'll let him know—but you may dread your reception.

[*Exit into the Pavilion,* L. S. E.]

Nic. Oh, the blessing of being faithful!—I have this day been beaten by all parties; friends and enemies have kicked me, and the bitterest foes agree in using me like a dog.

Enter GENERAL, in his robe-de-chambre. AMBROSE with him, from the Pavilion, L. S. E.

Gen. How dare you, sir, enter my doors? Do you think I am to be imposed upon by an hypocritical story, invented merely to replace yourself in my family?

Nic. Dear sir, I humbly on my knees beg your pardon for the mistake you are in.

Gen. Villain!

Nic. Call me what you will, so you won't speak so loud.

[*Retiring from Flora's Pavilion.*] Beat me, if you have the heart ; but, when your passion is over, permit me to do you a signal piece of service.

Gen. What service ?

Nic. Within a quarter of an hour your niece will be carried out of your house—I overheard the whole plot ; and Flora is at the head of it.

Gen. Do you dare to accuse that faithful creature ?

Nic. Faithful creature ! Why, sir, it was she that had me carried to the Marquis's hotel in a box.

Gen. What do you mean ?—in a box ?

Nic. Yes, sir, in a box—she procured the Marquis's escape, and made me take his place. I cried, but she laughed—and made Matthias take me away ; for he could not hear my complaints ; and when he got me on his shoulder, he did so shake and jumble me ; I was impatient to be let out—but that was ten times worse ; for he gave me to the care of four footmen belonging to the Marquis ; and as soon as they opened the chest, and saw it was me,—souse I went into a tub of cold water ; and then to dry me, they tossed me in a blanket. The Marquis took me out of their hands ; but he shut me up in a dark room—from whence I escaped through a hole in the wall, and got into the garden ; the gardener took me for a thief, and sent a shower of potatoes and cucumbers at my head—I saved myself by climbing over the wall, and tumbled into a ditch on the other side.

Gen. Very well. Go on.—What then ?

Nic. Is not that enough ? If it is not, I have more to come yet.

Gen. So much the better—I like to hear it extremely.

Nic. After all my distress, I thought myself happy when I reached your door—but I found it shut against me ; and had not a ladder been placed by the Marquis's people against that wall—

Gen. A ladder ?

Nic. Or how could I have been here ?—I ascended it softly—descended it softly—and overheard Flora plotting with the Marquis's valet—he that personated Don Carlos.

Gen. It can't be—I locked Flora in the pavilion.

Nic. These eyes saw her—and this was the plan she laid with the Marquis's servant ; within a quarter of an hour the Marquis is to walk on the other side that wall, and to give the signal he is there, by clapping his hand—thus—
[*Clapping his hand three times.*] Flora is to reply, by playing upon her guitar, “*Ma chère Amie.*” On hearing this air

(no other) the Marquis leaps into the garden ; your niece comes from the pavilion, runs to him ; they scale the wall, bid farewell to you ; and you run, with old Ambrose, limping after them in vain.

Gen. This demands attention. Flora deceive me ? She must then have false keys, both of my niece's apartment and her own.

Nic. If you doubt what I have said, go to bed, and consider of it again in the morning.

Gen. No—I cannot but believe you.—Ambrose !

Amb. Sir.

Gen. Fetch the blunderbuss.

Amb. Yes, sir.

[*Exit into the Pavilion, L. S. E. and returns with it.*

Gen. Do you two hide yourselves behind these elms ; and the moment the Marquis descends into the garden, seize him, and lead him home to his hotel.

Amb. We won't let him escape, you may depend upon it.

Nic. No,—you may depend upon it.

Gen. But behave with proper respect—no violence—that is according to our agreement.

Amb. Then for what did you send me for the blunderbuss ?

Gen. To keep him in apprehension, and make him go away quietly.

Nic. He would go much more quietly, sir, if you would permit Ambrose to shoot at him first.

Gen. I tell you, no—my honour is engaged. I'll place myself at the door of the pavilion, in order to seize my niece as she attempts to come out to him. [*To Nicholas and Ambrose*] Hush—and hide yourselves instantly ; do not stir or breathe. [*They hide behind the elms.*] Flora, come hither ; I have a word or two to say to you.

Flo. [Within, L.] Open the door, sir, and I'll come immediately.

Gen. [Unlocks the door.] And I warrant, when you are come, I'll make you give the signal in spite of yourself. I am resolved.

Enter FLORA from the Pavilion, L. S. E. with a guitar in her hand.

Flo. The General ! how unfortunate ! and my mistress has just got on her disguise. [*Aside.*] What did you please to want with me, sir ?

Gen. Flora, I want to have a little conversation with you.

Flo. Dear sir, if you have not any thing very particular to say, will you permit me to go to bed? for I die with sleep. [Yawning.]

Gen. Why you offered of your own accord to sit up till midnight?

Flo. Very true, but the air is so sharp. Bless me, I die with cold. [Shaking.]

Gen. And yet you walked in the garden after bidding me good-night?

Flo. He saw me—all is lost. [Aside.] Dear! what a thought!

Gen. I saw you, and you talked with somebody too.

Flo. He overheard us [Aside.] Dear sir, how was that possible, when you had me under lock and key?

Gen. You know you have false keys—I saw you lock and unlock the door.

Flo. He knows nothing, I find. [Aside.]

Gen. Give me those keys.

Flo. Indeed, sir, indeed, I have not any

Gen. Well, perhaps I am deceived.

Flo. Certainly you are.

Gen. Come, play me a tune on your guitar.

Flo. It is out of tune, sir. [Alarmed.]

Gen. Pshaw! pshaw! I command you to do it; one little air, and I'll go to bed.

Flo. What air, pray, sir?

Gen. The first you think of.

Flo. Upon my word, the thing is so out of tune.

[She plays a short tune reluctantly; just as it is finished, the Marquis, on the other side of the wall, gives the signal by clapping his hands.]

Gen. Vastly well; and there is somebody in the streets applauding you.

Flo. [Aside.] It is the signal.

Gen. This air was so finely executed you must play me another: “*Ma chère Amie*,” for instance.

Flo. [Starting.] No, pray, sir, excuse me; indeed, I can't. I am afraid he knows all. [Aside.]

Gen. What, refuse to play when you have met with such applause? Play, play, “*Ma chère Amie*.”

Flo. O sir, you have, I fear, discovered all; you know the whole scheme, I am sure you do, and on my knees—

[Kneeling.]

Gen. No forgiveness—don't hope for it—there kneel, and play the air I mentioned. Stir not for your life, nor utter a word. Obey.

[*Flora, with the most melancholy countenance, and half crying, sings and plays, "Ma chère Amie."* During the air, the Marquis appears upon the wall, and Julia steps one leg out of the window from which Flora has passed and repassed, dressed in a habit like the Marquis.]

Nic. [Seeing the Marquis on the wall.] There he is.

Amb. Let me go first, consider I am lame.

[They each strive to go first; Nicholas succeeds, and creeps softly along the hedge; at the end of the air, the Marquis jumps into the garden, and falls upon his hands behind the hedge.]

Mar. S'death, I am watched.

[*Julia, at the same time, comes out of the window, and places herself by the wall—Nicholas immediately secures her, and brings her down the stage--she, overcome with grief, covers her face with her cloak.*]

Nic. Here he is, sir; we have taken him. Now, Marquis, what would you say if I was to shut you up in a dark room?

Amb. [Presenting his gun.] No resistance, or you are a dead man.

Nic. Here he is, sir; we have taken him.

Flo. It is Nicholas has discovered all.

[*Aside—throws herself on one of the garden chairs.*

Gen. [To Julia.] Your humble servant, my good lord. Why do you hide your face? Do you think we don't know you? Go, go, my lads, conduct his lordship safe to his hotel, and stand sentinel at his door till the clock strikes twelve—and then return back in triumph; make haste home with him before the clock strikes—Away, away. [Exit Julia, led by Nicholas and Ambrose, R.] And so end my cares. [With great joy.] Poor fellow! suffered himself to be taken away too without speaking a word; caught in his own snare; sure a man never looks so ridiculous as when he is caught in his own snare. [To Flora.] And you, you perfidious—what have you to say? you who received my purse?

Flo. But I told you I did not deserve it.

Gen. Oh, yes; I don't know whether you did not deserve it; for you have taken a great deal of trouble to-day, and to very little purpose—Ha! ha! ha!—I believe the Marquis

will have enough to do to pay his wager, without paying you any thing, and so you see I have done it for him—and now I'll step and wish my niece joy of the success of her project.

[Exit to the Pavilion, R. U. E.

Flo. Oh, how I grudge your joy; but while he goes up the stairs, I'll see if my lady cannot come out of the window. [She goes to the window of the pavilion.] Madam, madam, Julia.

Mar. [From the hedge.] Flora, Flora.

Flo. Is it you, madam?

Mar. [Coming forward.] No, 'tis I.

Flo. You! who have they taken away then?

Mar. Your mistress.

Flo. [Expressing the most extreme joy.] My mistress! She! Madam Julia? Oh, do—do not tell me so—I can't bear it—I shall die with joy. [Running to the door of the Pavilion.] Sir—Sir—General—General—Sir—

Mar. Peace, be quiet; let me escape first.

Flo. That's right—away, away before the clock strikes. [Exit Marquis, R.] Thank heaven, he has only across the street to go. The General laughed at me—now, how I long to laugh at him. Sir, come down instantly, and take your share of the joke.

Enter GENERAL, from the Pavilion, R. U. E. with the bolster in his hand, dressed, with a cap on.

Gen. I found this in bed, instead of my niece—where, where can she be?

Flo. She has not even been in bed.

Gen. Where is she then?

Flo. Gone to the Marquis.

Gen. My niece—

Flo. Gone to his hotel—conducted by your own servants, and by your own command.

Enter NICHOLAS, running, R.

Nic. We have led him home—the clock has struck twelve; and now return in triumph, as you ordered. [Seeing the Marquis and Julia without.] O, heaven! do I see double?

Flo. No, but you have lost your wits.

Gen. It was not my niece they took, surely?

Enter the MARQUIS, JULIA, AMBROSE, SEBASTIAN, and several Domestics of the Marquis's, with lights, R.

Jul. Pardon me, my dear uncle, but it was your niece.

Flo. Pray, sir, return Nicholas thanks for all this; for 'tis he that has brought it about.

Nic. How came I not to find out the disguise? That other people should be deceived, I am not surprised at; but that I should be imposed upon is astonishing.

Flo. Henceforth learn, Mr. Nicholas, that when you meanly become a listener, you ought to hear every *syllable* that is said, otherwise you are exposed to blunders.

Mar. [To the *General*.] Uncle, will you permit me now to call you by that name?

Gen. "A man never looks so ridiculous, as when he is caught in his own snare." Yes, my lord, stand upon no ceremony. And was old Cecily faithful?

Jul. She was, uncle; and you must recompense her for the injustice you have done her, merely for her fidelity.

Mar. I will repay every servant, who either by their genius have aided, or by their fidelity obstructed, my designs; for, possessed of such a blessing as my Julia, I shall ever remember with gratitude the adventures of this day, and never cease to reflect with rapture on the "Midnight Hour."

THE END.

JJ

DISPOSITION OF THE CHARACTERS AT THE FALL OF THE CURTAIN.

SERVANTS.	SERVANTS.
NIC. AMB. MAR. JULIA. GEN.	FLORA. SEB.
R.]	[L]

